

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Brisa Cruz, and I am from West Haven. I am also part of Connecticut Students for a Dream.

I stand in support of SB284: AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS. Expanding access to HUSKY up to age 18 regardless of immigration status is an important step in making sure our immigrant community has access to the healthcare we all need and deserve. But our work doesn't end with expanding access up to age 18; we need to open access to HUSKY and healthcare to all immigrants of any age, including parents and adults.

In 2003, my parents brought me to the U.S in hopes of providing me with a better future and more opportunities than the ones they were offered. Growing up I would get sick very often but going to the doctors office wasn't always the first option, or even the second. We would try home remedies first, like vapor rub or some herbal tea. Thankfully they would help. It wasn't until my father, after a long shift at work, had to ride his bike home, because we did not have a car yet, that he was hit by a car. The car ran his leg over, and the people that had witnessed the incident called 911. He was then transported to the hospital via ambulance and had to undergo surgery. The surgery was successful but it required him to be off his leg for a couple of months to be able to make a full recovery. This meant that he would be unable to work and the only money coming in would be my mom's income. A month after the surgery we received the hospital bill in the mail. The bill was huge. The incident took place in 2005 and it wasn't until a couple of months ago that my dad was finally able to pay off the medical bill completely. He had been making payments for over 15 years.

My father isn't the only one that has had to seek medical help and because of our inability to access healthcare have become indebted. This is a story that is all too familiar and is seen far too many times in families. There have been a number of times in which my family members have become sick and wait until it gets pretty bad before they even consider seeking medical attention. They try all the home remedies and exhaust every single avenue before going to the doctor's. They know that there is a high cost that comes with walking into that doctor's office. Healthcare should not be a luxury that only some can afford, it should be available to everyone regardless of status.

If this bill were to pass it would mean that my community would be able to seek medical attention at the first sign of a problem rather than waiting until it gets bad. It would mean that a trip to the doctors would no longer be something we fear but rather something that we can do. We shouldn't have to make GoFundMe pages and rely on the kindness of strangers over the internet to help pay for our medical expenses.

I support S.B. 284 and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation. Looking forward, I ask the committee to work towards opening access to all immigrants regardless of age.

Thank you for your time,
Brisa Cruz